Means Restriction for Suicide Prevention

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OCHE Task Force

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Don’t panic!

- This is a relatively new area of focus!
Means Restriction

- Means Restriction involves removing or reducing access to potential means for suicide.
- Common lethal means for college student suicides include firearms, jumping from high places, poisoning, suffocation, drowning, and hanging (*Harvard School of Public Health, 2015*).
No Silver Bullet

- One component in a Comprehensive Plan

The Jed Foundation Campus Program

www.thecampusprogram.org/framework-for-success
Misconceptions

FALSE

- “They’ll just find some other way to do it”
- “Nothing with stop a suicidal person”

TRUE

- When a suicidal person’s preferred method isn’t available, it is unlikely that they will switch to a different one (Daigle, 2005), and that even if an alternate method is used, it is likely to be less lethal (Vyrostek & Annest, 2004).
Impulsivity & Suicide

- Two-thirds of attempts not pre-mediated (Kessler, et al., 2005; Drum et al., 2009)
- Decision time was short (Harvard, 2015):
  - 1/4 within 5 minutes
  - 1/2 within 20 minutes
  - 3/4 within an hour
Effectiveness of Means Restriction:

- Reduces immediate access to means in times of crisis or impulsive decision making
- Delaying time between thought and action
  - Aborts attempt
  - Increases likelihood of intervention by others
- Reducing fatality if less lethal means are chosen

*(SPRC, 2015; Harvard, 2015)*
Clinical Recommendations
Examine the campus for access to lethal means & potential options for enhancing safety:

- Limiting access to heights (rooftops, windows, balconies, ledges, bridges)
- Restricting access to heights with locks, alarm doors
- Providing crisis numbers or emergency phones near rooftop exits or other high places
- Considering the installation of break-away closet rods or limiting other implements for hanging
- Tracking, monitoring, and controlling access to toxic substances found in laboratories, pharmacies, and other departments that are accessible to students, staff, and faculty.
Review policies and practices regarding prescription drugs to examine:

- Limiting the quantity/dosage of medications with potential for harm/abuse
- Publicizing local take-back services for unused medications with potential for harm/abuse
- How to limit access to potentially lethal medication for an individual during times of crisis/suicidal thinking
Examine potential access to firearms & review potential polices/procedures

- Campus policies regarding gun possession and storage on campus
- Consideration of a centralized storage facility staffed by trained professional staff or university security/police
- Training in recognition of distress/signs of suicide for those storing/releasing firearms
- Reviewing policies on storing handguns and consider prohibiting storage in on-campus vehicles
- How to limit access to firearms for an individual during times of crisis/suicidal thinking
Review potential programs/policies that could enhance student safety

- Widely publicize crisis resources
- Examine guidelines for medical amnesty
- Utilize a campus care team or Behavioral Intervention Team
- Crisis resources placards by doors to rooftops or other potential locations
- Reduce high-risk drug and alcohol use among students

Ensure health/counseling clinicians are trained in the assessment of risk and access to means: CALM is a free, online training module provided by the SPRC at: http://training.sprc.org/
Create a Working Group for Campus Assessment

- Suicide Attempts/Completions
- Potential access to lethal means
- Services/policies to help restrict means

Composed of:
- Counselors
- Health Clinicians
- Campus Safety/Security
- Administration
- Faculty/Staff
- Relevant Community Partners
Remember—Don’t panic!

- Breathe.
Firearms

- What are current policies for possession/restriction?
- What are current practices for storage?
- How is access to firearms limited in times of crisis?
- What additional information is needed?
- Who needs to be a part of this discussion on your campus?
- What are potential barriers to change?
- Other questions/considerations:
Other Means/Resources

- How is access to heights limited? (rooftops, windows, balconies, ledges, bridges)
- How are toxic chemicals in laboratories monitored/restricted?
- Is there a Behavioral Intervention or Care Team on your campus?
- What additional information is needed?
- Who needs to be a part of this discussion on your campus?
- What are potential barriers to change?
- Other questions/considerations:
Prescription Drugs

- Are their options for medication take-back for unused meds with potential for harm/abuse?
- Policies for limiting amount/dosage for meds with potential for harm/abuse?
- How is access to potentially lethal medication limited in times of crisis?
- What additional information is needed?
- Who needs to be a part of this discussion on your campus?
- What are potential barriers to change?
- Other questions/considerations:
References


